

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

CHAIRMAN—SCIENCE-STATE-JUSTICE-  
COMMERCE

TRANSPORTATION-TREASURY-HUD-  
JUDICIARY-DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CO-CHAIR—CONGRESSIONAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
August 10, 2005

241 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4610  
(202) 225-5136

13873 PARK CENTER ROAD  
SUITE 130  
HERNDON, VA 20171  
(703) 709-5800  
(800) 945-9653 (IN STATE)

110 NORTH CAMERON STREET  
WINCHESTER, VA 22601  
(540) 667-0990  
(800) 850-3463 (IN STATE)

[www.house.gov/wolf](http://www.house.gov/wolf)

The President  
The White House  
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am deeply concerned about illegal immigration in America today. I believe strongly that the relative ease with which people are able to travel across our borders, particularly our southern border, is a vulnerability that al Qaeda will exploit.

Two months ago, I visited El Salvador and talked to a group of former Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang members who were in a program to have their tattoos removed so that they could leave the gang life. All but a few of the two dozen individuals had been to the United States and come back to El Salvador without any legal documents. As you may know, MS-13 is one of the most violent gangs in the country and has established roots in more than 30 states, including my congressional district in northern Virginia. To date, the FBI has assured me that there is no known connection between MS-13 and al Qaeda; however, the ease with which these gang members can cross our borders gives me great pause for alarm.

I have enclosed a transcript from the August 2 "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" on PBS which investigated the issue of gang violence in America. I have underlined several portions from correspondent Jeffrey Kaye, who led the report on page 1 with this statement: "Twenty-eight people dead and 14 wounded – that was the toll from an assault on a public bus in Honduras last December. The attackers, who sprayed the bus with automatic weapons, were members of a street gang called Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13. The gang, spread throughout Central America and the United States, has earned a reputation for ruthlessness."

Later in the report, on page 3, Mr. Kaye stated, "One dramatic example of the gangs' mobility: MS-13 member Ebner Rivera-Paz, the accused mastermind of the Honduras bus attack, was captured in Texas in February. *He has been deported four times over the past ten years.*"

I added the emphasis regarding the number of times that particular gang member had been deported to point out why I don't believe our immigration policies have kept pace with the changing realities of the world in which we live. The Department of Homeland Security has a practice of releasing non-Mexican illegal aliens or "OTMs" on their "own recognizance" (OR), rather than detaining them until their court hearing and deportation. This has become such a common practice that many non-Mexican illegal aliens freely give themselves up to the Border

The President  
August 10, 2005  
Page 2

Patrol, and in some cases actually seek out the agents so that they can get their OR papers. Once an illegal alien has this document, he is free to move about the country. In only the first nine months of this year, DHS has apprehended more than 100,000 OTMs.

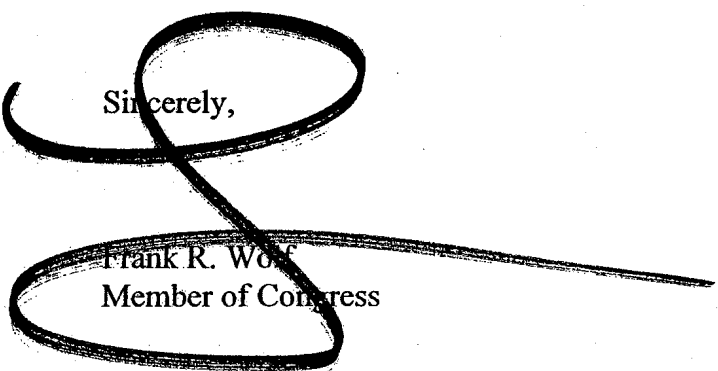
While in El Salvador, I heard estimates of more than 500 El Salvadorians crossing the border illegally every week. According to DHS records for 2004, there were nearly 17,000 El Salvadorian OTMs. This is an alarming number, considering that 85 percent of these illegal aliens never return for their scheduled court date and instead often simply disappear into our communities. Many of these individuals are not apprehended until after they commit crimes on American streets and in our communities.

I am the grandson of immigrants. Immigrants are at the foundation of our diverse nation and that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. However, immigrants must follow the law when coming to our country. I can tell you that this is an issue of growing concern to my own constituents. The immigration issue leads the issues I hear about most often from the people I represent.

I urge you to take the lead in engaging your administration on this issue when the congressional session resumes in September. Congress has taken some steps already this year, but a comprehensive solution is needed. Leadership from the White House can help focus the national dialogue to find a comprehensive solution which Congress can vote on this fall. Time is becoming critical.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress

FRW:cs  
enclosure